

SENATE RESOLUTION 213

By Williams

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Seaman First Class General Preston Douglas of Sneedville.

WHEREAS, our nation was conceived by individuals who were willing to sacrifice their personal safety and concerns to ensure our individual and collective freedom, and the Volunteer State is especially proud to be the home of so many valiant men and women who have performed above and beyond the call of duty; and

WHEREAS, Seaman First Class (S1C) General Preston Douglas, United States Navy, was one such exemplary individual who laid down his life for his country on July 6, 1943, while serving aboard the USS Helena in the Battle of the Kula Gulf; and

WHEREAS, listed as missing-in-action for more than sixty years, S1C Douglas will finally be laid to rest with full military honors on January 26, 2008, in his hometown of Sneedville; and

WHEREAS, feeling a strong call to duty for his country in the days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, General Douglas enlisted in the United States Navy on December 17, 1941; and

WHEREAS, S1C Douglas was serving aboard the USS Helena when, on July 6, 1943, in what would become known as the Battle of the Kula Gulf, the USS Helena was struck by three torpedoes from Japanese destroyers and sunk off the coast of Kolombangara Island in the Solomon Islands, suffering a loss of nearly 170 of her crewmen, including S1C Douglas; and

WHEREAS, sixty-three years later, a resident of Ranongga Island notified United States officials that he had found a set of dog tags in the ground near a trail by his village; and

WHEREAS, upon traveling to the Solomon Islands to investigate this claim, authorities from the Joint POW-MIA Accounting Command verified that the dog tags and remains did indeed belong to S1C General Preston Douglas; and

WHEREAS, what was lost in the confusion and chaos of that harrowing day in 1943, unfortunately, was information on how S1C Douglas arrived on the island, how or when he died, or who buried his body; and

WHEREAS, officials were able to locate General Douglas's sister, Regina Douglas Collins, who kept in contact with the Navy for years to see if he had been found; and

WHEREAS, sadly, Regina Collins passed away in November of 2007, just as plans were being finalized to bring her brother home after so many years; and

WHEREAS, S1C Douglas served his nation with great bravery and ability and performed his duties with the utmost skill; General Douglas's service during World War II, and now his legacy, can only be categorized as outstanding; and

WHEREAS, General Douglas will be laid to rest with full military honors in his hometown of Sneedville, Tennessee, beside the sister who never forgot him; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the singular patriotism, courage, and commitment to duty of this exceptional sailor and human being, the late Seaman First Class General Preston Douglas, United States Navy, whose loss is mourned by a grateful nation; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we honor the memory of Seaman First Class General Preston Douglas, reflecting upon his impeccable character, his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction, and his ultimate sacrifice for his country.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of S1C Douglas.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.